"Unlocking the Lockdown for our education community" -

A discussion paper on returning safely for learning to the campus of

Heritage International School for Sept 2020+

Current Situation: The Distance Learning Plan - March - May 2020:

At the beginning of 2020, no one could have predicted or foreseen the Covid19 global pandemic that engulfed the globe and at its height, UNICEF reported that over 90% of children, 1.6 billion students, had their schools closed as part of a mitigation strategy to slow down transmission of the virus in communities to allow public health authorities to recover and respond. At the time of writing, there is no effective vaccine. The WHO and virologists around the World, continue to work to find a vaccine and understand Covid19 better. Part of the issue in response is that there has not been a consensus in the scientific community on the best course of action and that has also been reflected in the way different countries have responded to the crisis.

Since 6th March, when we devised our Crisis Management Matrix (CMM) for the stages of a lockdown and a Distance Learning Plan (DLP), we have been able to continue operating as a school from the official closure in Moldova by Order on the 10th March. The school's DLP has operated on the following principles & is seen globally as one of the most successful models.

1) The School is open, only the campus is closed - a crucial mindset for all.
2) The DLP is a full daily interactive, synchronous schedule online using Google Classroom.
3) Lessons follow the schedule as normal.
4) We support every learner and teacher with the digital capabilities to operate and use the DLP. All Heritage teachers are now highly trained and experienced in digital learning.
5) Lessons are engaging, challenging, meaningful and allow continuation of the curriculum and progress. Very developed digital, flipped and blended learning in classrooms.
6) Every child continues to have routines, learning, interactions and is not socially isolated.
7) We have systems for wellbeing and support for students, staff and families.
8) The "spine of school" has continued with asynchronous weekly assemblies, newsletter, events, lectures, conferences, student councils and some clubs.
9) We are part of our National Education Community and since the successful operation of our DLP we have advised, shared and contributed with the Ministry (MECC) and schools around the country and World, to make sure students are learning.

10) We plan a safe return to school from the DLP as a community, knowing the DLP may have to be used again in some form to support a phased return to school.

Principles of return to school considerations published by Heritage on the 4th May:

1. Temperature Checks on entry to the school. No parents/visitors inside, as before on Level 2

2. Phased Grades in and to consider set times of the day – not a full schedule.

3. Travel and Health declarations, including that you have not been in contact with someone in quarantine. (We're going to use Google Forms in advance of student return).

4. Masks to be worn at all times in public areas and on buses – can be removed if in their own classroom or office. A limited supply of masks will be available at school.

5. Social/Physical Distancing in Classes – at least one metre.

6. Social Distancing/Physical in Meetings - using the auditorium spaced out, rather than gathering in common room areas.

7. Social/Physical Distancing at meal times– consider this a high risk time and students mix, are moving around and have to remove their masks to eat

8. Maintain regular, thorough hand-washing and sanitizing. School has been "DEEP CLEANED":

9. Contact sports may not be appropriate. - Some activities (Daily Mile, Badminton etc) should be possible.

10. Who to exclude from the School Site: There will be decisions about when to exclude from the school campus those who have come within a number of degrees of separation of the virus.

Here we will be using the principles outlined in the CMM Anticipating Wellbeing Issues on Return to School We are anticipating that we will be dealing with a range of wellbeing issues associated with the return to school.

1. Return to the 'Old Normal' - Staff and students are going to take time to readjust to working at School. We are all familiar that it takes a few days at the start of every term to get back into the routine of getting up earlier, dressing for work, doing the daily commute and reporting for duty. Whilst some can't wait to be back in school, there will be a significant proportion of colleagues and students for whom working from home was a preferable working lifestyle. We need to recognize that it is going to take time to get back to anywhere near the 'old normal' (I suspect schools will change in small ways in light of the closures)

2. Parental Concerns about Reopening. There is a proportion of parents who believe that Covid-19 still poses a health risk and are unhappy about school re-opening. Conversely, there are parents who believe that the Government is being overly cautious. School will need to strike a balance and manage both groups sensitively.

3. Sense of Loss. It is likely that there is going to be a time almost like mourning that key school events have been cancelled.

4. Summer Travel. One of the other anxieties is that we have a very difficult summer in prospect. Whilst it may be technically possible to travel back to Europe/UK or to go on holiday to a limited number of countries that might have opened their doors, ongoing Covid-19 regulations mean that the price of a couple of weeks of freedom is likely to be a 14-day imposed quarantine. Some will need to travel to take the opportunity to see ageing relatives or to attend a family wedding, but increasing numbers are simply resigned to being confined to camp through the summer - This is going to take strain on families and staff.

5. Ongoing Fallout from Covid-19 Closures. The impact of Covid-19 is going to be with us for months.

There will be families where parents have lost loved ones and they will need support.

There will also be parents who have lost their jobs or their livelihood who will need more practical financial support at this testing time. Some families will be trapped in different countries where lockdown is still in effect and unable to reunite. The key over the coming months is for school to do everything it can (within the permitted bounds of social distancing) to bring our communities together and to help them reunite and to heal.

What the global education community thinks and their return/mitigation strategies:

In those countries where a return to school is already underway, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, France or where physical schools remained open but there was a developed mitigation strategy for the virus, such as the UK or NSW in Australia, there is plenty of evidence and examples for us to look at and consider in our we devise our own return to school plan.

All countries and communities have struggled with this crucial question on school closures and t**he ongoing impact of children, vulnerable children, missing school and their prolonged mental health wellbeing issues being created longer term the more we remain closed out of physical school.** There is also no single point of scientific research consensus in all of this, especially around the evidence of children and their susceptibility for transmission of the virus to the wider community.

A large study of 13000 Icelandic children in the New England Journal of Medicine is frequently cited as evidence that children are not major transmitters of the virus and they suffer, on the whole, mild symptoms if they become infected. The UK Dept of Health's 2014 study into pandemic's shows evidence of the timing and duration of schools lockdowns historically, going back to the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, is crucial and would support the actions of what we have all done in Moldova at this point with school closures but also points to the limitations of this being prolonged especially around a child's wellbeing longer term. The school's successful management and strategy in dealing with the flu outbreak in January 2020 also needs to be considered here as we had nearly 40% of students off at one stage. The recent Great Ormond Street Children's hospital European study of 582 young people from 25 European countries also highlighted the evidence of children receiving mild symptoms and supporting the view of managing safe physical distancing in schools with a range of measures in place.

The country that many are looking at for the evidence is Denmark. The measures taken there are about ensuring there is a "trustful return to school" and that small bubbles of a teacher and students are in operation to islote and ensure no transmission to a large number of adults.

Measures include:

1) Pupils kept in small groups throughout the school day
2) Teaching takes place outside in purpose designed utilised areas as much as possible
3) Days are kept to the absolute essential minimum.
4) Hygiene practices are well established including 1 meter distance observed at all times helped by signage, washing hands every hour, wearing masks, closed lunch system, regular deep cleans, staff do not meet physically in school unnecessarily
5) **It is not a "BUSINESS AS USUAL" mindset** for now or the foreseeable future.
6) Use of preparation webinars and videos available to teach children, families and staff the new normal of returning to school under these circumstances.
7) A "recovery" process curriculum and measures in place to support children and staff wellbeing. Allowing people to talk about it and continuous socio-emotional psychological assessment. A positive and hopeful culture in schools!
8) School leadership playing a crucial role in reassuring and supporting colleagues.
9) Celebrate and bring together the community - using physical distancing and digital methods still. Keep the community cohesive and together, now even more important. Leadership is 10% action, 90% communication.
10) Clarify expectations and share all plans well in advance. Doing nothing is not an option, trust and confidence is everything as we cannot afford students to stay at home months.

Considerations for school leadership now - June 2020:

The discussions now as we are planning in more detail, are grouped together under three key headings with the priority on a safe, calm, nurturing environment to grow, learn and develop. We have to transition from online school to physical school. The crisis, uncertainty, disruption and isolation will have had a deep impact on our children and we need to repair and rebuild relationships. Children have spent months at home with reduced contact with peers and wider family networks. A range of wellbeing issues need to be considered from loss of income/job, domestic situations, close bereavements and uncertainty about the future.

Returning to school is not without risk and the reality is that it can not be done 100% risk free in the current crisis. But the longer children stay at home , off school we are also putting them at risk in many other ways especially on their mental health and their academic and personal development. This could end up being the much bigger longer term crisis in society. We have to ensure we continue to make sure the psychological risk is managed and trust and confidence with our families and colleagues that we can mitigate and find an effective solution is paramount. As we said at the start of the crisis*: "DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION".* Schools have to **provide certainty for our young people now**, this summer, as a moral duty.

The understanding, knowledge and examples from around the World show that we can create a safe learning environment to allow a return to school even though it will operate in a very

different way for now. Unlocking these first steps is crucial for any school community. There are two pandemic axioms being used at the moment which are useful here:

A: *"Maslow before Bloom"*. B: *"We are all in the same storm but in different vessels"*. There should not be a "one size fits all" approach for schools. We are at different stages.

Three key headings, based on the Microsoft global education paper "Reimagining Education", for a safe return to school to consider for our return strategy to be successful:

1) **Safety and Operations**
2) **Wellbeing**
3) **Learning**

A: Safety and Operations:

We have to make the campus safe to return to school. People are not going to want to go back into the buildings if they are concerned about how safe they are. Training webinars and videos in August for the whole community once we have our agreed return strategy is crucial. The psychological risk that staff, students and families feel is crucial to reassure on and all mitigation is in place. We know we cannot eliminate risk 100%,but no situation like this can and keeping children out of physical school for more months, will bring its own equal unwanted costs.

-Treat the building as essentially on an interior lockdown

- It is about returning safely, balancing costs and practical measures, keeping learning at the heart and making sure we prevent infection.

- Regular weekly deep cleans in addition to daily thorough cleaning. Cleaning surfaces is not enough.

- Everyone in masks and wearing gloves - faceguards better so we can see one another and children are not wearing a mask all day if temperatures warm.

- Entrance and exits are explicitly defined for users and have sanitizer, temperature check and register of in and out. Use of sanitised mat at all entrances.

- Larger spaces considered, outside and how we enforce the 1m rule including being able to make use of the wider corridors. Looking at outdoor learning - use of the Quad. Need to consider how this will look in the winter months if this is prolonged.

- Ventilation issues - circulating stale air will aid infection - system of replacing stale air with fresh outside air and class ventilation is crucial. UV filters outside on vents for the air?

- Signage ensuring distance kept and key measures displayed - marked throughout the school and campus grounds.

- A focus on spaces where infection can spread more - communal areas like the canteen (not an open lunch system in operation- lunches prepared at home to be eaten in classrooms potentially), cafe, bathrooms, water fountains. One way hallways.

- Creating class/grade "bubbles" in school to cut down contact.

- Teachers and support staff are not able to mix contact in the building to cut down risk of transmission to other adults and children.

- Visitors being given one entrance and more services online. No visitors in main school at all.

- School day stopping at 3:30 - clubs and support learning continues online on a form of the DLP - reduce time in school. Synchronise schedules with families.

- Designated times between 8-9am for grades to arrive in school through designated extrances..

- Staggered breaks and lunches so very few are out of class at the same time and cuts risk of transmission. Reducing to a minimal hallway, stairwell and around lockers traffic.

- Regular hand washing at intervals throughout the day.

- A prepared and safe isolation medical area for anyone with signs of infection - 14 days home quarantine.

- A track and trace data capture, regularly updated, of travel abroad for all students, families and staff from the summer.

- Supplies into school being wiped/sanitized always.

- Training webinars and videos for children, staff and families to prepare for the return and new expectations.

- No large gatherings at all which means all assemblies, briefings, meetings, first day return celebrations, etc are all either asynchronous recorded or held live online under the modified form of the DLP.

- PE lessons need to be completely re thought around the notion of students needing exercise, activity and movement - as much outside as possible and ideas like the Daily Mile. Changing?

- Simultaneously using a camera in the classroom for lessons for a DLP if students are off unwell or still unsure of returning.

- Less use of paper and materials in learning and around school that can aid transmission.

- Review emergency evacuation procedures to accommodate physical distancing protocol.

- Transportation Review on campus bus line ups to maximize space between students or stagger bus arrival/departure times Review sanitization routines with buses and taxis Ensure safety using physical distancing on buses Coordinate with public transportation about altered schedules. Encourage senior and responsible students to walk or take bikes to school. Provide safe spaces for bikes to be locked.

- Community Partnerships With Public Health, identify key messages regarding safe practices, align protocols and provisional plans for rolling closures. Clarify hygiene practices when students return home every day.

- Establish isolation spaces where students or staff can self-isolate if necessary.

- Ensure teacher work rooms provide space for physical distancing.

- Reconfigure large spaces (such as gyms, staff rooms and cafeterias) for larger classes Remove unnecessary furniture or supplies to optimize space/and reduce unnecessary touching in learning spaces.

- Visually mark floor space so physical distancing is easy to follow (hallways, playgrounds, bus line ups, classrooms).

- Install visual reminders about hygiene and physical distancing at critical areas such as washrooms. Use multiple languages and graphics where necessary.

- Keep our families and community continually informed. IHH newsletter and FAQs, social media, FB, online meetings of parents, - Trust and Confidence; our community together to get our children back to physical school.

- Vet the school-reopening plan with our legal team & in close coordination with advisory from the WHO, the MECC and Ministry of Health.

B: Wellbeing:

-Review and make explicit adaptations to Student Behaviour Policy/Code to ensure students are aware of expectations of physical distancing

- Develop a mechanism for regularly identifying, assessing and coordinating the school's response to student needs. Look at a "recovery" curriculum programme to be in place.

- Develop a mechanism for regularly identifying, assessing and coordinating the school's response to student needs before re-opening. Conduct this process regularly due to fluid situation

- Determine who are known to be the most vulnerable students and where necessary co-develop an interim individualized education plan or school plan with all partners before school re-entry. Consider early re-entry to provide more intensive support and a smoother transition Identify students who may be at risk.

- Consider students with special education needs, those who are international, disengaged students, students who have faced trauma, students of essential workers

- Reconfirm collection of student data as information may have changed. This includes home address and contact information. Include siblings and where they go to school Anticipate increased student mobility across communities and adapt intake practices so that students can be immediately accommodated into school and its programming.

- For continuity, make transportation and other arrangements so students can remain in current settings Invite vulnerable students to re-enter first to accommodate transition

- Begin to identify student leaders who can act as positive influencers during this time.

Preparing Staff

Staff re-enter in advance of students in the second half of August to receive adequate training of new H&S protocols. Collectively re-examine assessment policy and practices to ensure students are not unfairly jeopardized. Demonstrate proper handling of PPE, masks, hand washing. Help staff understand trauma: how to recognize and respond. Review hygiene and cleaning practices with all staff, once school has re-established. Require all staff participate in on-line Boundary training Include occasional staff and school volunteers in all H&S training. Ensure staff or volunteers who begin working after school re-opens receive all necessary training. Establish mentoring/coaching mechanisms for new teachers or those staff needing more support especially our international staff arriving from abroad. Provide ongoing ICT support for teachers. Employ an effective communication system to establish staff absences and for immediate school closures. . Engage staff in reconsidering how specific subjects or roles may need to be adapted. Establish a check-in system for staff for their well-being.

C: Learning:

- Stagger class schedules to reduce hallway traffic during transitions like arrival, departure, class changes, recess. Getting back to learning from the start is absolutely crucial!

- Consider flexible scheduling for students identified above. Consider which classes will need increased PPE (e.g. intensive needs/high touch- Sure Start/Grade 1).

- Reduce class size and where possible appoint one main teacher for students Incorporate student movement/stretching into programming, especially if students are expected to learn in one place.

- Move learning outdoors when possible. Shift hands-on learning to semester 2 where possible Incorporate education about physical distancing and health measures into Phys-Ed and Health programming.

- Adapt PHE for physical distancing. Reconsider how experiential learning (Co-operative education, technical, classes) can be taught while complying with H&S expectations.

- Provide engaging extended day programming for students of essential service workers or for students who require additional support such as tutoring.

- Become paperless where possible, to reduce paper transferred between people (including assessments). Postpone school excursions and school-wide gatherings

- Reduce sharing of supplies like pens, art supplies, notebooks. They should be brought from home or purchased and given to students to keep.

The First Week of Reopening:

Establishing New Routines. Establish a H&S entry routine that include masks, hygiene and testing (where available) Consider purchasing face shields for all students and staff. They are reusable, less expensive, and enable better facial recognition, but plain, no crazy designs. Spend the first week, reviewing new routines and H&S expectations and new rules for student safety. Establish student's personalized space/desk Establish class morning routines to check emotional/physical well-being . Establish new lunch time routines and co-construct fun ways to engage students. Provide maps and guidance for students about how to transition safely, where use of physical space has been altered Increase supervision of students at times when students habitually gather (e.g. arrival and departure, recess, class transitions, lunch period). Invite student leaders to engage students in positive, physical-distancing activities and challenges.

Rob Ford,

Director, 28th June, 2020.

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